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Ministry of Advanced Education

PROVINCE ENHANCES QUALITY AT PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS

VICTORIA – New measures that will protect students, enhance quality, and strengthen accountability at B.C.'s private post-secondary institutions were announced today by Advanced Education Minister Murray Coell.

"After completing an internal policy review within the ministry, we're taking action to increase protection of students and build on the improvements introduced in 2004 at private career training and degree-granting institutions in B.C.," Coell said. "All of the measures we're introducing today will encourage excellence in the private sector."

The new measures announced today will be in effect for September 2007, and will include:

1. Providing information to help students make informed choices. For example, an online registry of private career training institutions that have had registration or accreditation cancelled or suspended is being created. Entries will stay on the registry for five years, giving potential students access to the school's history.
2. Requiring all private institutions to report on any advertising in B.C. and abroad to ensure programs are represented accurately.
3. Putting an inquiry mechanism in place at the Ministry of Advanced Education that students or the public can use if they have concerns about institutions that have ministerial consent to grant degrees under the Degree Authorization Act.
4. Developing new annual performance reporting requirements for institutions granting degrees that show how their programs match the approved plans, which will include annual visits to all private degree-granting institutions.
5. Enhancing reporting requirements for career training schools – for example, how many of their graduates find jobs in the fields in which they trained.
6. Offering greater transparency in the way all private institutions are regulated.
7. Appointing two new members to the board of the Private Career Training Institutions Agency, one of whom will be a student. A government representative already sits on the board, bringing the number of members from outside the private career training sector to three, recommended by Campus 2020 to enhance accountability and reflect the broader public interest.

In addition, the ministry will accelerate the recommendation contained in the recent Campus 2020 report, which stated that the government should launch a more comprehensive review of private post-secondary governance, legislation and accountability. This review will continue through the fall and will include private English as a second language schools.

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"I believe we must continue to evolve our system so that career students receive the quality training they expect in order to compete in a growing economy," Coell said. "This review will help us ensure B.C. continues to offer high standard and reliable post-secondary education opportunities for all students."

There are 515 registered private career trainers in B.C., and 14 private and out-of-province public post-secondary institutions authorized to provide degree programs here. Almost 70,000 international and domestic students attend these schools each year.

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1 backgrounder(s) attached.

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